DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 445 379 CS 510 417

AUTHOR Frisby, Cynthia M.

TITLE Black Like Me: How Idealized Images of Caucasian Women Affect Body Esteem and Mood States of African-American Females.

PUB DATE 2000-08-00

NOTE 34p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (83rd, Phoenix, AZ, August 9-12, 2000).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Advertising; *Black Students; Comparative Analysis; *Females; Higher Education; *Mass Media Effects; *Mass Media Role; Research Needs; Self Esteem; *Undergraduate Students

IDENTIFIERS African Americans

ABSTRACT

Using the theory of social comparison, the present research explores how exposure to idealized images of physically attractive Caucasian women affects and changes the self-reported esteem levels of African-American undergraduate students. Though research reveals that the number of portrayals of African-Americans in ads is growing, little if any research has explored how images and advertisements influence behaviors and attitudes toward advertising images and messages. A sample of African-American females was surveyed on body esteem and other self-perception variables. The sample was then later exposed to 18 images of physically attractive females after which a second measure of body esteem was assessed. Unlike Caucasian females, data show that self-esteem levels for this African-American sample of females were relatively unaffected and changed after exposure to idealized images of physical attractive, thin, beautiful Caucasian models. Theoretical implications are discussed with respect to future research in the area of racial issues and mass media effects. (Author/RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original document.

ED 445 379

Running head: IDEALIZED IMAGES AND WOMEN OF COLOR

Black Like Me:
How Idealized Images of Caucasian Women Affect Body Esteem and Mood States of African-American Females

By:
Cynthia M. Frisby, Ph.D.
Missouri School of Journalism
Department of Advertising
76F Gannett Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
Office: (573) 882-6232
FAX: (573) 882-9002
E-Mail: frisbyc@missouri.edu
Home Page: http://www.missouri.edu/~advcf

Presented to the Minorities and Communication Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication at the annual convention in Phoenix, Arizona Aug 9 – 12, 2000.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

C. Frisby

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

CS 510 417

ABSTRACT

Using the theory of social comparison, the present research explores how exposure to idealized images of physically attractive Caucasian women affects and changes the self-reported esteem levels of African-American women. Though research reveals that the number of portrayals of African-Americans in ads is growing, little if any research has explored how images and advertisements influence behaviors and attitudes toward advertising images and messages. A sample of African-American females was surveyed on body esteem and other self-perception variables. The sample was then later exposed to 18 images of physically attractive females after which a second measure of body esteem was assessed. Unlike Caucasian females, data show that self-esteem levels for this African-American sample of females were relatively unaffected and changed after exposure to idealized images of physical attractive, thin, beautiful Caucasian models. Theoretical implications are discussed with respect to future research in the area of racial issues and mass media effects.

HOW IDEALIZED IMAGES IN PRINT ADS AFFECT WOMEN OF COLOR

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of idealized images of Caucasian women in print ads on women of color (the terms "African-American," "women of color," "black," are and will be used interchangeably throughout this paper). Academic research has continued to explore and examine the frequency and portrayal of African-Americans in advertising (see for example, Taylor and Stern, 1997; Taylor, Lee, & Stern, 1995; Zinkhan, Qualls, and Biswas, 1990). Yet, there has been little to no analysis on the effects of Caucasian or African-American images used in ads on the attitudes and purchase behaviors of members of various ethnic groups.

From a strategic standpoint, advertisers know that in order to ensure that audiences are effectively responding to advertisements, black models may be more effective than white models when communicating with (and persuading) a black target audience (Bush, Hair, & Solomon, 1979; Choudhury & Schmid, 1974; Green, 2000; Wheatley, 1971; Whittler, 1991). Despite this evidence, it is not commonplace, but more a rare occurrence to find "ethnic" ads with African-American images as main characters in advertisements placed in mainstream media (e.g., Bowen & Schmid, 1997).

Research on market segmentation suggests that, from a marketing perspective and strategic planning focus, African-Americans, as a target audience, are an extremely important target for advertisers (Gray, 1997). African-Americans, according to research, spend approximately $270 billion a year on consumer goods (Morris, 1993). As a subculture, African-Americans tend to spend more than the average adult in product categories such as personal care items, women's accessories, jewelry, infant and toddler clothing, and other toiletries (Fisher, 1996). Even though advertisers and marketers have recently started targeting and tailoring ad messages to this important audience (Frisby, 2000; Gray, 1997).

The African American population has impressive buying power, is increasing in size faster than the general population, and is rising in socioeconomic status. This particular sub-culture represents tremendous marketing potential and opportunities, yet few studies in advertising focus on African-American attitudes toward advertising and how images found in mainstream media may influence attitudes and behaviors (Green, 2000).

Advertising researchers have recently been concerned with investigating the factors or characteristics that will influence consumer attractiveness, likeability, and desirability for products or services (Morse & Gergen, 1970; Cash et al., 1983; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Richins, 1991; Wheeler and Miyake, 1992). Research on images used in print and broadcast advertising suggests that consumers make comparisons with people and/or models in many advertisements and, as a result, are left with unrealistic images of perfection and wealth (Harter, 1992; Martin & Kennedy, Mander, 1977; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Richins, 1991). What is not known, however, is whether or not ethnic consumers or members of certain minority groups make comparisons with images in advertisements. The present study seeks to determine if African-American women or "women of color" engage in social comparisons with idealized images.

Empirical research on the effects of social comparison on self-esteem has shown that advertisements for beauty products, in particular, tend to create unhappiness among young women about their bodies (e.g., Richins, 1991). Data suggest that exposure to idealized images in ads negatively affects a woman's self-confidence--causing them to indulge in unhealthy behaviors (Freedman, 1984; Irving, 1990; Rodin, 1986; Solomon, Ashmore & Longo, 1992; Streigel-Moore, Silberstein, 1992). Careful analysis of and reflections on the studies and samples employed in many of these advertising effect studies reveals a major limitation: most of these studies involve samples that are primarily comprised of young Caucasian women. Consequently, a causal effect of advertising on consumers from different ethnic groups and backgrounds has not yet been investigated. The present research explores the effects of idealized advertising images on self-esteem and mood states of African American women. The goal of the current study is to answer the question: "how do idealized images in print ads affect a woman of color's perceptions of her body, beauty, and overall esteem?"

To clarify the effects of advertising on self-esteem and concepts among women of color, an exploratory research study was conducted. The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine if women from different cultures engage in a social comparison (consciously or subconsciously) when exposed to images contained in advertisements for health and beauty, cosmetic, clothing and diet products and/or services. Research in this area could determine if advertising in this respect is doing more harm (i.e., deflating self-esteem of minority group members) or if the images influence ethnic or minority group members to purchase products.

Advertisers who want to maintain or strengthen sales in ethnic markets must make a special effort to reach these markets. Data obtained from the current project can be used to determine and provide information concerning the following issues as they relate to advertising

and mass communication: (1) will Caucasian images of affect black and white women in the same way? (2) Will data obtained in the present study show that compared to white women, black women are similarly affected by idealized images in advertisements? That is, will idealized images of Caucasian women negatively impact the self-esteem and self-perceptions held by women of color? (3) does using an all-white image in advertising offend blacks and other ethnic markets?

Unfortunately, very few studies to date have centered on the effects of idealized images on ethnic markets, namely women of color. Data obtained in the present paper should prove useful to advertisers, advertising academicians and researchers, as well as marketers because the information obtained might identify and determine how females from an important sub-culture is affected by advertisements featuring Caucasian images. Further understanding of the causes and consequences of consumer behavior of various target groups and segments is greatly needed, particularly in the field of advertising.

"Additional research is needed to address the effects of lowered satisfaction with self on purchase behaviors and on non-purchase activities" (Richins, 1991, p. 82). The present study hopes to add to the literature by examining the impact of advertising images on self-esteem and self-concept. More specifically, the proposed research project will attempt to examine the conditions by which a social comparison with an idealized image would most likely occur and will identify the effects of the comparison. The marriage of paradigms like social comparison theory with experimental studies can ultimately provide some basis for assessing the cumulative effects of exposure to idealized images in advertisements in idealized settings and/or beautiful models.

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Sometimes when I thumb through a magazine or watch television and see those ads with beautiful models, I don't really pay attention. I mean, they don't really get to me. But, every now and then, there will be something about the model that really gets on my nerves. Sometimes the model

makes me feel jealous, depressed, or even mad at myself. Then I think, it's just an ad, she's just a model. She doesn't even look like me." (Regina, a 20-year old African-American college student).

Every day, at any moment, images of beauty, particularly images in advertisements and television commercials confront women of all colors. According to Richins (1991), women see unrealistically attractive idealized images in advertising and either consciously or subconsciously engage in self-evaluation. These images, she argues, "engender comparison and in so doing create self-doubt and dissatisfaction" (p. 72). What is not clear or evident in the literature on effects of idealized images on women is an understanding or explanation of the generalizability of the findings. But, do these images, for example, create self-doubt and dissatisfaction for women from different ethnic backgrounds?

Empirical Research on Effects of Idealized Images in Ads

The idealized female body image presented in advertisements has drawn sharp criticism from academicians, media critics, and feminists (e.g., Cain, 1996; Kilbourne, 1995). In addition to thinness, critics often argue that the images presented in ads typically are tall, slender and extremely attractively—an image that is rarely found in the "real-world" (Kilbourne, 1995). According to researcher, idealized images in advertisements set an impossible standard for many women (e.g., Kilbourne, 1995; Richins, 1991).

Researchers argue that the mismatch between the ideal media image the actual body image could lead to serious consequences for the average woman. Consequences in the mismatch have been identified as: dissatisfaction with body images (Richins, 1991); dissatisfaction with one's attractiveness (Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991), and a unbounded drive for thinness (Harrison & Cantor, 1991). Research suggests that exposure to idealized images might hurt a woman's self-esteem and self-concept, leading to other more serious consequences (i.e., eating disorders).

For example, Myers and Biocca (1992) found that brief exposure to idealized media images led to elasticity in body image perceptions among college-age women. Harrison and Cantor 91997) found that exposure to idealized images present in the media was significantly related to unrealistic desires for thinness. In another related study, Cash, Cash, and Butters (1983) exposed women to idealized advertising images featuring either an attractive or an unattractive model. Results revealed that women exposed to attractive models rated their own level of attractiveness lower than did women who were exposed to the unattractive models.

Studies in social psychology have focused on the influences of and factors that effect self-esteem of out-group members for years (Crocker et al., 1987). Time after time, research results show that despite negative feedback, criticisms, and discrimination attempts, many African-Americans retain high self-esteem (see for example Crocker & Major, 1989). According to Crocker & Major (1989), out-group members or "stigmatized individuals" are "frequently able to protect and buffer their self-esteem" (p. 624). However, few, if any, of the studies have investigated the effects of the media's use of idealized images on an ethnic woman's self-esteem (i.e. Hispanic, Asian, African-American, etc.).

According to social comparison theory, members of minority groups should be "somewhat less secure in their self-evaluations" (Festinger, 1954, p. 136). Thus according to Festinger, minority groups tend to seek stronger support within itself and are less able to tolerate differences in ability relevant to that group.

As it relates to social comparison theory, the literature on the effects of images on women has established the following:

- There is evidence that advertising generates social comparison in some instances (Martin & Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991). Females tend to compare themselves to models in advertisements.

- Women exposed to highly attractive models are less satisfied with their own physical attractiveness (Irving, 1990; Myers & Biocca, 1992; Richins, 1991).
- Women exposed to ads showing beautiful, thin female models report lower self-evaluations than women exposed to ads showing "average-looking" models (Irving, 1990; Richins, 1991)
- Exposure to advertising with highly attractive models raises the comparison standard for physical attractiveness (Martin & Kennedy, 1993).
- Females with lower self-perceptions of physical attractiveness or self-esteem are more affected by idealized images than females with high perceptions of self (Martin & Kennedy, 1993).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory may be used to explain why idealized images affect a woman's self-evaluation and esteem. This theory assumes that individuals have a need to evaluate themselves and that they do so via comparison with others. More recently, social comparisons have been described as serving two additional motives besides self-evaluation: self-enhancement, and self-improvement (Wood, 1989). The following sections will briefly describe research and theory related to self-evaluation, self-enhancement, and self-improvement.

Self-Evaluation

The most useful comparisons are those that inform and provide accurate information about where one stands in relationship to the dimension under evaluation (Wood & Taylor, 1991). The need for accurate information is a self-evaluation function of social comparison. When an individual is familiar with the dimension under evaluation, similar others help the individual accurately interpret his or her own standing on the dimension under evaluation (Wood, 1989). Research on self-evaluation typically presents subjects with a choice among various tasks grouped by level of ability. Evidence suggests that subjects tend to select the tasks that they

perceive will help them to accurately assess their abilities (Campbell, 1986; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987)

Self-Improvement

A self-improvement function results from an individual's interest or desire to feel efficacious, inspired, and motivated. Comparisons with others who are superior to or better off than one are called upward comparisons. Individuals engaging in upward comparison may learn from others, be inspired by their example, or become highly motivated to achieve a similar goal. It is possible that the aim of many advertisements employing idealized images is to motivate consumers to engage in a spontaneous social comparison with an idealized image resulting in the consumer's desire and motivation to buy a particular product and "look like" or become like the image employed in the ad.

According to Wood (1989), self-improvement comparisons are clearly visible in everyday life. Wood (1989) argues that upward comparisons occur because they lead to self-improvement, particularly when the dimension under evaluation is relevant, highly desired, and when the individual is already motivated to achieve a goal. Self-improvement is the main effect of upward comparison targets because they motivate individuals to do better and teach individuals how to perform betters (Seta, 1982; Wood, 1989).

According to Wood (1989), upward comparison targets are those most typically sought for purposes of social comparison. Festinger (1954) also believed that comparison choices will typically be oriented toward superior, similar others (e.g., upward comparisons). People who are doing better than the self on a particular dimension are most likely to provide information that will facilitate improvement on that dimension.

From an advertising perspective, it is possible that upward comparisons will lead people to evaluate themselves more negatively (Wood & Taylor, 1991). Very few empirical studies have been conducted or could be identified that support the notion that upward comparisons encourage people to evaluate the self more positively . Rather, studies often show that that upward comparisons can be both self-enhancing and self-deflating. "There has been much less research explicitly devoted to self-improvement as a goal of social comparison than to the other comparison goals" (Wood & Taylor, 1991, p. 29).

Self-Enhancement

People harbor unrealistically positive views of themselves, and these positive illusions often result in comparisons that make people feel better about themselves or their circumstances (Regan, Snyder, & Kassin, 1995; Wood & Taylor, 1991). Consequently, comparisons with others that are thought to be doing better, regardless of how informative the comparison is, can be highly threatening. When self-esteem is threatened, an individual, motivated to protect the weak or threatened ego, may seek downward comparison. Self-enhancement occurs as a result of downward comparisons--comparisons with similar others who are inferior or less fortunate--especially when the dimension is relevant to the self (Wills, 1981). The basic principle of downward comparison is that people feel better about their own situation and can enhance their subjective sense of well being when they make comparisons with others who are worse off or less fortunate. Since the present study is concerned with idealized images (or upward targets), the present research does not expect to find nor will it explore this social comparison process.

Theoretical Assumptions of Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory is based on the following assumptions (Festinger, 1954; Suls & Greenwald, 1984;):

1. People have a "drive to know." People are motivated by a need to know that their opinions are correct, and they need to know what they are and are not capable of doing.

2. Individuals will not make comparisons with others who are different or who are perceived as different on relevant dimensions. This similarity hypothesis, according to Suls (1977), is the most widely cited and tested theoretical assumption. It is believed that comparisons with similar others provide more knowledge and more useful information (Festinger, 1954). That is, when people compare with dissimilar others, the only information that they gain, learn, or can be certain of, is that their performance or opinion is unique (Wood, 1989). Without a similar other individuals cannot determine or accurately assess their abilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The main goal of the present study is to assess reactions to images used in mainstream print media ads by African-American females. The research questions that are examined in the present study are:

RQ1: What effect does an idealized image, particular when the image is of a different ethnic background, have on self-esteem and subjective well-being?

RQ2: Do idealized images of Caucasian women found in popular print magazines create self-doubt or dissatisfaction for African American women?

The proposed project will answer these questions and address the research expectations by investigating how women of color perceive images in advertisements; and investigating the relationship between advertising images and effects on body self-esteem and mood. Taken together, this study will provide a detailed overview on how advertising images affect African American women.

Festinger (1954) argued that social comparisons only occur when an individual makes comparisons with others who are similar with respect to the same skin color, stature, opinions, abilities, etc. Therefore, consistent with the literature on social comparison, it is expected that African-American women will maintain favorable views of the self after exposure to Caucasian models.

The present study specifically examines how African-American women respond to Caucasian idealized images in print ads. Based on the literature, the present study specifically tests the following research hypotheses:

H1. Women of color will not engage in social comparisons with idealized images of Caucasian females (relates to theoretical assumption #2).

H2. After exposure to idealized images in popular women's magazines, African-American women will retain high self-esteem. Self-evaluations and body esteem levels for African-American women exposed to ads showing beautiful, thin female models will not change.

EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND METHODS

Sample

Since students are also consumers, it was determined that a student sample is an appropriate and valid population for the study. In addition, because of their homogeneity, student samples are often preferred to the general population as they tend to reduce the effects of other external factors. Participants were recruited on a volunteer basis from large liberal arts and science courses at a large midwestern university. In some cases, extra credit was offered along with refreshments, pizza, and soft drinks. The study was conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board.

38 African-American females participated in a study described as research about the impact of mass media on the U. S. society. At the sign-up, participants were asked to complete the Body Self-Esteem scale (Franzoi & Shields, 1984). Approximately one or two days after completing the body esteem scale, participants were asked to report to the focus group meeting room where they each received a booklet with instructions and a description of the study.

Written instructions informed participants they were participating in a study focused on how articles in print magazines impact society and consumer behavior. Participants were then told that they would be asked to read and evaluate five articles under consideration for an upcoming issue in a popular woman's magazine. They were also told that their "job" was to not only select all editorial content for this magazine but were to evaluate the advertisements as well.

Additionally, they were asked to complete a mood scale prior to entering the room. This procedure, they were told, was to ensure that individual mood did not influence or effect their judgments and assessments of the articles and advertisements. Each participant read 5 articles and evaluated 18 advertisements.

Stimulus Materials

The Ads

Based on the perspectives of two coders, a total of 157 advertisements were initially identified as possible stimuli material. To meet the criteria, an advertisement had to include a full body visual of the model, little to no copy or words, and include an advertised product for clothing, jewelry, perfume, hair care, and other personal toiletry items. The 157 ads were taken from magazines frequently read by females like *Bazaar*, *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Essence*, *Mademoiselle*, and *Vanity Fair*.

As an exploratory study, the main goal was to develop a comprehensive set of ads that are found in mainstream media. Since research discovered that African-Americans spend money on product categories such as accessories, perfume, jewelry, clothing, and personal items, ads for products fitting each of these categories were selected.

Using a random numbers table, fifty ads for perfume, health and fitness, hair care, clothing, and cosmetics were selected from the larger pool of ads. In order to ensure that images used in

the study would be perceived as images of Caucasian women, ten coders rated the idealized images in the ads on the basis of the model's ethnic background (Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, other), her physical attractiveness, credibility, and elegance. The researcher then took a stratified systematic sample of 18 ads and products from this list of fifty, choosing every third case after a random start.

Participants involved in a preliminary study served as raters or judges. Interdependent raters or judges rated the selected ad's on the following: (a) model attractiveness and beauty; (b) how interesting the ad was; (c) the ads' persuasiveness and believability; (d) overall liking for the ad. Ads with highly rated models were selected. Eighteen images (along with the 5 dummy stimuli) were scanned into the computer and projected onto a screen using a slide presentation package.

Each of the ads was projected on a screen for approximately 20 seconds. Participants were told to watch the screen and the image for the entire duration and after the screen is cleared to rate each ad (and story) using a rating scale that was provided. After presentation of the image, the screen went black for approximately a minute and a half. During this time, the participants were asked to list their thoughts to and reactions to the stories and the images.

The Instrument and Measurement Scales

Background variables: The primary background variables measured in the study are gender, age, income, education, and occupation.

Participants were asked to respond to a 7-point Likert rating scale. Responses to the items, "I have seen this model before," (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree), "I am familiar with the model," (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree), "attractiveness of the model," (1 = very

attractive, 5 = very unattractive); d) familiarity with the model (1 = very familiar, 5 = very unfamiliar) were measured.

In order to classify thoughts and opinions of the Caucasian models, a separate analysis was conducted on the open-ended item. Participants were asked to "list all the thoughts you have about the image." Guidelines and procedures for coding the thoughts and opinions are discussed in the following section.

Open-Ended Thought Analysis Codebook and Procedures

Two independent individuals (two females) of similar background (both identified their ethnicity as "African American") were selected to code participant reactions and thoughts. Coders were trained in the coding procedure. Explanations of categories, category definitions, and dimensions listed in the code book were provided to each coder during a training session. Verbal instructions were enhanced by practice coding sessions in which examples of thoughts and reactions were shown to the coders and coders were asked to code the data according to their understanding of category definitions. Coders were asked to discuss any problems or questions they may have had regarding coding the data and thoughts.

To ensure reliability, both coders independently content analyzed thoughts. Coders were told as little about the purposes of the study. They were not told or informed of the intention to analyze how people respond to ethnic images. Disagreements were resolved in consultation with the principal investigator. Negotiation of disagreements was not allowed: In the absence of unanimity, the majority verdict was taken; where there was not majority the thought was excluded from analysis.

After data was collected, steps were taken to read the responses and identify common elements. Thus a coding scheme of mutually exclusive categories was developed to insure

intercoder reliability. An important step was to identify or segment the thoughts. After all ratings and assessments had been conducted, participants were asked to complete a final mood measure. Subjects were then told that a final assessment of the Body Esteem measure was needed. Once they completed this final part of the study, participants were debriefed and informed about the true purpose of the study and were dismissed.

Operationalization Of Thought-Listing Categories

Type of Thought/Response

Individuals were asked to "list any and all thoughts that you have about the image." Responses were coded based on the following:

1. Beauty- refers to comments listed that describe or refer to the model's physical beauty, features, or physique. (Examples of thoughts that are classified in this category are: "She is a beautiful model," "She is attractive," "She has a beautiful smile," "Nice body.")
2. Product-type – Participant responses were placed in this category when the focus of the individual's comments(s) was on the product or some characteristic of the product. ("What type of product is that?," "I am not sure if I am familiar with product she is advertising," "I don't use that type of product," "I don't wear make-up").
3. Related to self-concept- Comments that focused on the physical features in relationship to one's self- or self-concept were categorized as an thought or opinion about the image as it relates to ones self. Examples of thoughts that were placed in this category were: "I want to look like that," "If they could promise me that the product, I would buy it in a heartbeat," "If only I were that beautiful." A code of 1 was assigned to indicate self-evaluation, a code of 2 was used to indicate upward social comparison, and a code of 3 indicated no occurrence.
4. Other- Comments made that did not center on any of the above categories.

For each category, coders were instructed to place a 1 (the thought occurred) in the appropriate category. If a participant's first thought related to the advertised product (i.e., "I do not like that brand," or "I like that brand and/or product,") for example, coders were instructed to place a "1" (positive instance of the thought) in the "product" column for that category and a "2" (thought did not occur) in the other coding categorical columns. If the participant engaged in a social

comparison or the thought related to coding category number 3, coders were instructed to identify the type of social comparison thought. For example, a statement such as "I am looking at her and I do not see me," was assigned the code "1" as it is obvious that the individual was attempting a self-evaluation. If the participant responded to the image by saying, "I wish I could look like that," coders were instructed to code the thought as a upward social comparison thought ("2") in the social comparison variable column.

Coding Reliability

Percentage agreement figures for all reported categories were in excess of the 85% agreement standard recommended (Kassarjiian, 1977). Reliability was 81.9% for coding type of thought. A research assistant who was blind to the hypotheses and was trained in the coding procedure coded the open-ended responses. A second coder was used to ensure validity and reliability of the coding categories.

Independent Variable Measures

The Attention to Social Comparison Information: The ATSCI scale measures the extent to which one's behavior is influenced by concerns over what others might think of them or how others might act toward them as a function of their product usage and possessions (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Inclusion of the ATSCI scale help to indicate and identify individuals who are more sensitive to images in ads and social comparison information. Thus, the ATSCI measure was selected as a means of classifying subjects according to their sensitivity to social comparison information. Internal consistency reliability estimates were .85 and .83 (Bearden & Rose, 1990). Individuals scoring high on this measure should report feeling that it is more likely that others will judge them by their purchase of an advertised product and should care more about what others think about them.

Dependent Variables

Time: Pre and Post Social Comparison Opportunity: Post testing was conducted on measures of body esteem. Analyses of body esteem change scores was used to indicate whether or not self-esteem interacted with idealized image. The pre and posttest analyses will be used to answer research questions that seek to determine how images affect a woman's esteem and perceptions of her own body.

Body Self-Esteem: Level of satisfaction with self and body will be measured by a series of items asking the respondents how they feel about their physical appearance. Measures included on the body esteem scale are designed to measure specific aspects of self-concept that are importantly related to self-esteem and how one feels about her body and appearance.

The Body-Esteem Scale requires respondents to rate 40 body parts using a five-item Likert Scale. Respondents were asked to respond to items concerning their weight, physical condition, hips, legs, and other body parts (i.e. 1 = have strong positive feelings to 5 = have strong negative feelings). Items were then summed to produce a total score ranging from forty to two-hundred. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction and esteem with one's body. The BES has shown adequate internal consistency with subscale α values ranging from .78 to .87 (Franzoi & Shields, 1984).

Mood: Four items will measure transient mood states (i.e., sad, happy, tired, alert). Item scores will be summed to provide a one-dimensional mood score index. Coefficient alpha for the scale is reported to be .78.

Manipulation Check

In order to determine the attractiveness of the images, a manipulation check followed the collection of dependent variable measures. Respondents assessed the model's similarity,

attractiveness, credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness. The source credibility was measured using a 5-item, 7-point semantic differential scale.

Overview of the Study

Participants were asked to report to "meeting" to discuss current issues in mass media and journalism. They were told that the researcher was interested in how certain magazines and editorial content are used to attract and gain the attention of young women aged 18 – 34. Participants were allowed to look at the ads for 20 seconds and were asked to give their honest opinions about the ads. After 20 seconds, the image disappeared from the screen and participants were asked to continue their evaluations.

The Task

The study's main purpose is to determine what African American women think or how they react when looking at or evaluating an ad containing idealized images of Caucasian women. The evaluation/rating sheet included one open-ended item that asked participants to list their first reaction or thought to the image. While this procedure drew some information that was not of interest to the researcher, it was believed that it was better to lose some detail than to risk the possibility of priming or having participants censor themselves and their true thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. To ensure honest responding, the investigator informed participants that responses and opinions were completely anonymous.

Data Analysis and Procedure

The first step in data analysis involved reading the responses obtained from the participants. This was done to identify common elements and coding schemes. A content analysis was conducted using the coding schemes discussed earlier. The number of thoughts and opinions in each category was then counted and summed to provide an overall index. Indices were

calculated for each of the thought-listing items and overall means were then used to identify and understand the type of affect elicited by the model, purchase intent, and other thoughts because of exposure.

RESULTS

Reliability Analyses

Reliability scores for the scales used in the study were as follows: Attention to Social Comparison scale α = .81 and Body Esteem Scale, α = .92. A repeated measures MANOVA showed that of the 18 images tested, ten images were perceived to be more attractive ($F [17, 544] = 13.0$, $p < .0001$). An a priori contrast indicated that subjects differentiated between (physically attractive M = 2.3) and somewhat attractive models.

Sample

A total of 38 African American females participated in the study. The average age was 19.9 (n = 36, sd = 1.08). Age of participants ranged from 18 (n = 1) to 22 (n = 11). A total of 277 thoughts was coded. Data from 2 participants were missing and subsequently discarded from further statistical analysis. The average number of thoughts made by each respondent was M = 7.7, SD = 3.6.

Of the 38 subjects, approximately 17 individuals scored 0 - 30 and were classified as low in attention to social comparison information while 18 were classified as being high in attention to social comparison information. The mean for attention to social comparison was, M= 34.1, SD = 11.2.

Similarity of the Image

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the data with level of social comparison (high or low) and image (18 levels) as the independent variables. Participants

were asked to indicate overall how similar or dissimilar the image was to their self-perceptions. The response scale ranged from 1 = very dissimilar to 5 = very similar. Overall, participants found the images to be more dissimilar (n = 33, M = 1.7, SD = .88).

Main Analysis

A single index value was computed by summing responses to the body esteem scale taken before exposure to the images. Responses to the body esteem scale taken after exposure were also summed to provide a single measure of body esteem. Focus was on the changes in esteem due to exposure to idealized images. Thus, change scores were computed by subtracting esteem scores taken before exposure from scores after exposure. The researcher then examined changes in esteem and mood states as well as the type of thoughts and reactions African-American women had to each idealized image.

Table 1: Mean number of thoughts and types of reactions to idealized images of Caucasian women in ads

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beauty or attractiveness of model	36	4.28	2.80
About the advertised product	36	1.06	1.01
Comparisons to Self	36	2.00	2.45
Upward social comparison	36	.36	.96

Note: $F(3, 31) = 32.2$, $p < .0001$.

Because of issues of dissimilarity and based on the theoretical assumptions of social comparison theory, Hypothesis 1 proposed that women of color would not engage in social comparisons with idealized images of Caucasian females. This hypothesis was supported.

Data analysis reveals that when exposed to images of Caucasian women found in print ads, African-American females made more references concerning the attractiveness of the model (i.e., "she's pretty) than they did thoughts that related to the advertised product, social comparisons made with self, or upward social comparisons, $\underline{X}^2$ (3) = 15.91, $\underline{p}$ < 0001. In sum, data indicate that while some participants did make self-evaluative thoughts when exposed to the images, the dominant thoughts and reactions made by African-American females reflected mere descriptions of the model's physical beauty (i.e., "nice smile," "she is beautiful," "nice body," "she has nice teeth," "she is very attractive," etc).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that self-esteem levels for African American women would not be affected by exposure to Caucasian images. As data in table 2 show, exposure to the Caucasian images did not affect esteem, $\underline{F}$ [1, 33] = .17, $\underline{p}$ = .7. Data analysis further revealed that exposure to the images did not negatively impact mood levels and states of the African American females in this study ($\underline{F}$ [1, 33] = .022, $\underline{p}$ = .9), suggesting that exposure to idealized Caucasian images did not significantly affect mood and self-concepts for African American females in this study.

Insert Table 2 About Here

In order to present the results of the ANOVA clearly, Table 2 provides the statistics and results of the data analysis. It is believed that these data are essential when confirming analyses and validating discussion of the results. The data in the first two rows of Table 2 show that esteem levels ($\underline{p}$ = .68) and mood states (p = .88) were relatively unaffected by exposure to the idealized images. The table also shows significant differences were not found with respect to attention to social comparison. Females high and low in how much attention they pay to social comparison

information in ads did not differ with respect to the types of thoughts and reactions they had to the images (all $p > .5$).

The ATSCI scale was used in this study to measure the extent to which behavior is influenced by concerns over what others might think of them or how others might act toward them as a function of their product usage and possessions (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). It was determined that this scale would help explain why females in this study may have been affected by the images as its primary purpose is to identify individuals who are more sensitive to images in ads and social comparison information.

According to data analysis, individuals scoring high on this measure did not differ from individuals who were not sensitive to images in ads, $p > .5$. Thus, both high and low individuals were relatively unaffected by exposure to the images.

The results of the MANOVA presented in Table 2 show no main effect of attention to social comparison information nor was there a significant interaction between attention to social comparison information and type of thought. Responses to the images seem to express more acceptance and appreciation of the image rather than negative reactions to or thoughts about the images used in ads.

Discussion

The research question guiding this study was: "what effect does an idealized image of different ethnicity have on self-esteem and subjective well-being for African-American females?" The results from this study generally supported hypotheses generated from the literature on social comparison. Evidence suggests that similarity may play a huge role in how African Americans are impacted and affected by idealized images. Future research might explore how variables such as

involvement and similarity with the images influence and effect self-esteem levels of women of color. Specifically, this research revealed that women of color do engage in some type of self-evaluation with the images, but, the effect of that self-evaluation does not negatively change mood state or satisfaction with their bodies and physical attractiveness. This data indicates or seems to suggest that compared to Caucasian women, African American women are able to buffer or protect self-esteem when exposed to idealized images of beauty and physical attractiveness.

According to Crocker and Major (1989), ethnic group members are more likely to compare themselves with others who share a common characteristic or fate. Data obtained in the present study seem to support this hypothesis. Data also support Festinger's (1954) hypothesis that people prefer to compare with others who are similar to themselves in attitudes, values, or personality. Social science researchers like Miller (1982) have found that this preference to compare abilities with similar others relates specifically to physical attractiveness and thus explains why differences were not found in this study when African American females were exposed to images of physically attractive females.

Ethnic group members, according to Crocker and Major (1989), may also prefer to compare themselves with in-groups rather than out group members "to protect the self-concept or self-esteem from threatening comparisons" (p. 614). These researchers assert that ethnic group members may specifically avoid comparisons with majority group members because they know "such comparisons would have painful consequences for self-esteem" (p. 615). Future research should explore whether or not comparisons with in-group members allow the ethnic group person to focus on qualities other than "stigmatized" ones and hence provides an opportunity to compare favorably with others on different comparison dimensions.

Some research has investigated African-American perceptions of advertising. Research by Durand, Teel, & Bearden (1979) for example has found that African-Americans tend to be more receptive than Caucasians to advertising in general. In fact, a recent study found that African-Americans are more materialistic (see Yoon, 1995). However, little, if any research has investigated how African-Americans are effected by images in ads. Little experimental research was found that examines how exposure to certain advertising messages and ideals affects attitudes, purchase intent, and other behaviors.

Theoretical Implications

Findings in this study provide some insight to some prediction factors that might be used to explain and understand variation among African American consumers. This study explores how social comparison literature and theory might be used to investigate why and how people of different ethnic groups might be influenced or impacted by images in ads. The present study extends previous research that suggests that exposure to idealized images negatively effects a woman's self-esteem (see Richins, 1991). Data obtained in this study suggests that similarity may play a major part in how idealized images affect mood and self-perceptions.

Evidence obtained in the present study support results and conclusions made in previous studies on African Americans reactions to advertising (see for example, Whittler, 1996). Data in this study found that African-American female students are generally favorable to images in ads and that they are not negatively affected by idealized images as their Caucasian counterparts. Future research might build on this study by ascertaining whether or not the similarity variable discussed in great detail in the social comparison literature might explain why black consumers respond more positively to black models (Solomon, Bush, & Hair, 1976).

Presently, images of African-American models can be found primarily in "black media" like Black Entertainment Television or in print magazines such as *Essence*, *Jet*, *Ebony*, and *Heart and Soul*. Since research indicates that members of minority groups are more likely to find a spokesperson from their own group to be more credible, trustworthy, and realistic (Desphande & Stayman, 1994), one could argue that using black images in black media to sell to black target audience members is merely advertising's attempt to give the people what they want.

The present research and data obtained might be used to fill a void in the literature regarding effects of advertising on African-American attitudes toward advertising. It could serve as a benchmark for future studies in advertising research, mass communication theory and effects, and communication theory. In addition to exploring percentages of minority portrayals over time, researchers might consider other factors like how advertising appeals effect purchase intent and exploring the relationship between exposure to images in ads and actual purchase behavior. Studies such as these should be undertaken in order to help advertisers develop and create effective and accountable advertising messages as well as advancing the field of mass communication by providing theoretical insights and explanations for issues related to the media and racial and ethnic concerns.

Bibliography

Blascovich, J. & Tomaka, J. (1991). Measures of self-esteem. In J. P. Robinson, P. R. Shaver, & L. S. Wrightsman (Eds.), Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes (pp. 115-160). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Bowen, L. & Schmid, J. (1997), Minority presence and portrayal in mainstream magazine advertising: An update, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 1 (spring), 134-146.

Bristor, J., Lee, R. & Hunt, M (1996). "African American Images in Television Advertising: Progress or Prejudice?" Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, 14, (Spring) 48 – 62.

Bush, R., Hair, J. F., Jr, & Solomon, P. J. (1979). "Consumers level of prejudice and response to black models in advertisements," Journal of Marketing Research, 16(August), 341 – 345.

Cain, A. (1996, March 22). Why trying to look like Barbie is a very bad idea. News & Observer, p. 4D.

Cash, T. F., Cash, D. W., & Butters, J. W. (1983). Mirror, mirror, on the wall...?": Contrast effects and self-evaluations of physical attractiveness. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 9(3), 351-358.

Choudhury, P. K., Schmid, L. S. (1974). "Black models in advertising to Blacks," Journal of Advertising Research, 19 – 22.

Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma, Psychological Review, 96(4), 608 – 630.

Durand, R., Bearden, W (1979). "Racial Differences in Perceptions of Media Advertising Credibility," Journalism Quarterly, 56, (Autumn), 562 – 566.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. Human Relations, 7, 117-140.

Fisher, C. (1996). "Black, Hip, and Primed (to shop).," American Demographics, 18(9), 52 – 58.

Franzoi, S. L., & Shields, S. A. (1984). The Body-Esteem Scale: Multidimensional structure and sex differences in a college population, Journal of Personality Assessment, 48, and 173-178.

Frisby, C. (2000, March). Effects of ethnicity and product involvement. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southwestern Marketing Association, San Antonio, TX.

Freedman, R. J. (1984). Reflections on Beauty as it Relates to Health in Adolescent Females, Women and Health, 9 (Summer-Fall), 29-45.

Green, C. (2000). Effects of Integrated Marketing, Journal of Advertising,

Gray, V. L. (1997). "Going After Our Dollars," Black Enterprise, 27(12), 68- 78.

Grow, G. (1988). Don't hate me because I'm beautiful: A commercial in context. (Report No. CS 506 173). Portland, OR: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED 297 376).

Harrison, K., & Cantor, J. (1997). The relationship between media consumption and eating disorders, Journal of Communication, 47(1) 40 – 67.

Harter, S. (1992). Visions of self-Beyond the me in the mirror. Paper presented at the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, Lincoln.

Irving, L. M. (1990). Mirror Images: Effects of the standard of beauty on the self-and body esteem of women exhibiting varying levels of bulimic symptoms, Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 9(2), pp. 230-242.

Kilbourne, J. (Producer) (1995). Advertising and obsession with thinness: Slim Hopes, Video by media Education Foundation, Northhamton, MA.

Mander, J. (1977). Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television, New York: Morrow.

Martin, M. C., & Kennedy, P. F. (1994). The measurement of social comparison to advertising models: A gender gap revealed. In J. A. Costa (Ed), Gender issues and consumer behavior, (pp. 104-124). Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, California.

Martin, M. C., & Kennedy, P. F., (1993)., Advertising and social comparison: Consequences for female preadolescents and adolescents, Psychology & Marketing, 10(6), pp. 513-530.

Miller, P. (1990, April 30). Black Viewers See More, Advertising Age, 29.

Morris, E. (1993). The Difference in Black and White, American Demographics, 15(January), 44 – 49.

Myers, P. N., & Biocca, F. A. (1992). The elastic body image: The effect of television advertising and programming on body image distortions in young women. Journal of Communication, 42(3), 108-133.

Peterson, R. A., and Sauber, M. (1983). "A mood scale for survey research," In American Marketing Association Educators Proceedings, Patrick Murphy et al (eds.), Chicago: The American Marketing Association, 409-414.

Regan, P. C., Snyder, M., & Kassin, S. M. (1995). Unrealistic Optimism: Self-enhancement or person positivity, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 10, 1073-1082.

Richins, M. L. (1991). Social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. Journal of Consumer Research, 18, 71-83.

Robinson, J. P., Shaver, Phillip, R., & Wrightsman, L. S. (Eds.). (1991). Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes. San Diego, California: Academic Press. Inc.

Rosenberg, M. (1986). S elf-concept from middle childhood through adolescence. In J. Suls & A. G. Greenwald (Eds.), Psychological perspectives on the self, 1984, (Vol. 3, pp. 107-136). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Solomon, M. R., Ashmore, R. D., & Longo, L. C. (1992). The beauty match-up hypothesis: Congruence between types of beauty and product images in advertising. Journal of Advertising, 21(4), 23-34.

Streigel-Moore, R. H., Silberstein, L. R., and Rodin, J. (1986). "Toward an understanding of Risk Factors for Bulimia, American Psychologist, 41 (March), 246-263.

Suls, J, & Greenwald, A. (1984). Psychological perspectives on the self, (Vol. 3, pp. 107-136). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Taylor, C. R (1993). "The portrayal of blacks in business publication advertising," Journal of Marketing Management, 2(2), 26 – 33.

Taylor, C. R., Lee, J. Y., and Stern, B. R. (1995). "Portrayals of African, Hispanic, and Asian-Americans in Magazine Advertising," American Behavioral Scientist, , 38(February), 608 – 621.

Wheeler, L., & Miyake, K. (1992). Social comparison in every day life. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62(5), 760-773.

Whittler, T. E. (1991), "The effects of actors' race in Commercial Advertising: Review and Extension," Journal of Advertising, 20(1), 54 – 60.

Wood, J. V. (1989). Theory and research concerning social comparisons of personal attributes. Personality Bulletin, 106, (2), 231-248.

Yoon, K. (1995). Comparison of Beliefs about Advertising, Attitude Toward Advertising, and Materialism Held by African Americans and Caucasians," Psychological Reports, 77, 455 – 466.

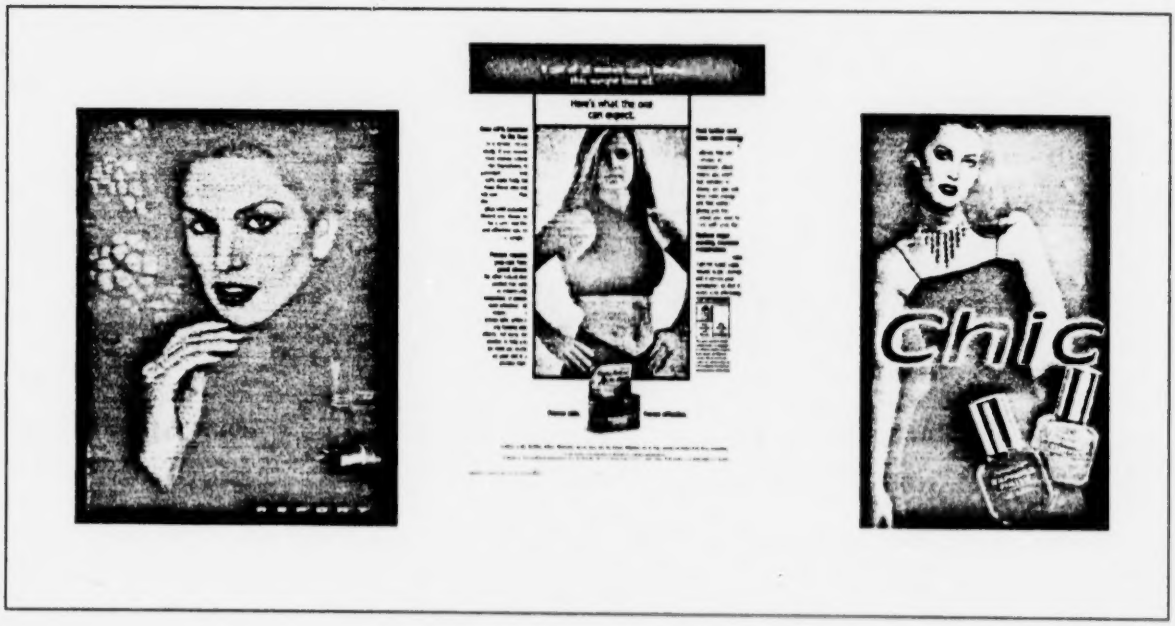
Zinkhan, G. M., Qualls, W. J., Biswas, A. (1990), "The Use of Blacks n Magazine and Television Advertising: 1946 to 1986," Journalism Quarterly, 67(Autumn), 547 – 554.

Table 2:

Multiple Analysis of Variance on Changes in Esteem and Mood Scores and Mean Number of Thoughts as a Function of Exposure to Idealized Images of Caucasian Women.

		Sum of Squares	df	ean Squa	F	Sig.
Change scores i esteem	Between G	13.151	1	13.151	.170	.684
	Within Grou	92.090	27	77.485		
	Total	05.241	28			
Change scores i	Between G	22E-02	1	.022E-02	.022	.883
	Within Grou	56.202	31	1.813		
	Total	56.242	32			
Thoughs related self-evaluation	Between G	4.079	1	4.079	.667	.420
	Within Grou	01.807	33	6.115		
	Total	05.886	34			
Upward social comparison thou	Between G	.198	1	.198	.204	.655
	Within Grou	31.974	33	.969		
	Total	32.171	34			
Thoughts relatec beauty	Between G	7.113	1	7.113	.886	.354
	Within Grou	65.059	33	8.032		
	Total	72.171	34			
Thoughts relatec product type	Between G	.108	1	.108	.100	.754
	Within Grou	35.778	33	1.084		
	Total	35.886	34			

Figure 1: Example of Idealized Images used to Advertise Health and Beauty Products



BEST COPY AVAILABLE